

The Electric Mercury

U.S. Army Medical Command Electronic News Summary, September 2003

**For more on these and other important stories, see September 2003 printed issue of The Mercury.
This is a service of the Public Affairs Office, Headquarters MEDCOM.**

Four trials advance new anthrax vaccine

The next-generation anthrax vaccine based on a decade of work at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases is now moving into four clinical trials. The institute did legwork for current vaccine candidates by singling out which protein in *Bacillus anthracis*, the bacterium that causes anthrax, signals the body to produce immunity. After finding the protein, researchers took the gene that codes for it and used recombinant DNA technology to produce it in bacteria, yeast and viruses. Bacteria worked best. The resulting recombinant protective antigen should provide a high degree of safety because it's just one protein from the disease organism. Researchers have proved it is effective in non-human primates.

Townsend assumes duties as AMEDD's senior NCO

CSM Sandra K. Townsend became command sergeant major of U.S. Army Medical Command and senior enlisted advisor to The Surgeon General in July. She succeeds CSM Jack L. Clark Jr., who retired due to illness. Townsend previously served as command sergeant major for the AMEDD Center and School and Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

Protected shelters prove value in Iraq

The Chemically and Biologically Protected Shelter (CBPS) System is winning praise from soldiers who are using it in Iraq. The highly-mobile shelter provides a controlled, clean environment for forward-deployed medical units. Though Operation Iraqi Freedom did not become a chemically or biologically contaminated battlefield, the shelter's ability to control temperature, keep out sand and other environmental contaminants, and its mobility and ease to set up, make it a valuable asset. Medics report the system has proved itself in combat as a command post, sleep tent, patient-hold tent, dental tent, X-ray tent, treatment tent, trauma tent, treatment jump tent, mental-health tent and clearing station.

Fall brings new leaders, new contracts

September is here and the summer moves are about complete, notes Army Surgeon General/MEDCOM Commander LTG James B. Peake in his monthly column. Many medical units have new commanders and command sergeants major. Peake predicts soldiers will enjoy working with new MEDCOM CSM Sandra K. Townsend as medics transition to 91W and sustain their medical skills through the TC 8-800 (Semi-Annual Combat Medic Skills Validation Test). Also on the fall-season plate are new TRICARE contracts, consolidating multiple TRICARE regions to just three. The TRICARE train is now on the fast track and it will take everyone's best efforts to bring it into the station on time and on target, he writes. But he expresses confidence that the AMEDD team of military and civilians is up to this task.

Other important stories in this month's edition of the *Mercury* include:

- A promising dengue-fever vaccine, which Walter Reed Institute of Research helped develop, is now in human clinical trials and could get FDA approval in six or seven years.
- Distribution Operations Center professionals at U.S. Army Medical Materiel Agency are experts in packing and storing medical materiel that requires refrigeration or special handling.
- To prevent Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, mental-health experts take former POWs through "decompression," with health evaluations and coaching on dealing with media, homecoming, etc.
- U.S. military civil affairs units help Iraq's medical community restore the Iraqi health-care system after decades of abuse and neglect.
- Gaith, a 7-year old Iraqi boy with pins in his bones after a traffic accident, is one of many U.S. and Iraqi patients treated by the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment's Forward Surgical Team.
- Two Army medics are in 2003 Soldier Show cast, on tour through November, performing 103 shows. SSG Glynis M. Harris is a licensed practical nurse at Fort Belvoir, Va., MEDDAC. SPC McKenzie Morgan Quint is a mental-health specialist at Fort Huachuca, Ariz., MEDDAC.
- COL Elizabeth "Liz" Mittelstaedt receives Dr. Anita Newcomb McGee Award from the Daughters of the American Revolution. Award is presented annually to an active-duty Army Nurse Corps officer who exemplifies excellence in professional and military nursing.
- Six otolaryngology residents at Tripler Army Medical Center achieve the highest average score on a mandatory in-service examination, compared to all other otolaryngology residents in the nation. One, CPT Phillip Littlefield, earns the highest individual score in the country for his level of training (one year remaining). Other otolaryngology residents are MAJ Umesh Marathe, CPT Jason Boole, CPT Jennifer Bager, CPT Tom Nowlin and CPT Eric Purdom.
- Medical Command's Auditor of the Year is Corlis Alexander of Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Her auditing was credited for about \$3.3 million in monetary benefits.
- Photos: Joseph Chatman of the U.S. Army Medical Materiel Center-Europe gives T-ball lessons to a German orphan during the Nardini House Friendship Fest on July 5.
- Mike Meines, in the last in his series on the customer-service ethic, says customer relations is actually less about the customer than it is about employees who feel good about themselves, what they are doing and where they are doing it. Positive customer relations is a by-product.
- Commentary: "U.S. helping Afghanistan make progress," by SPC Jim Wagner, concludes that, despite country's problems, progress is occurring and U.S. soldiers, airmen, Marines and sailors here play a role in it; "Army's current missions require pediatric skills," a letter-to-the-editor from MAJ Ingrid G. Scott, responds to a *Mercury* article on the need for more pediatric resources in deployments to developing nations, by noting the Army may have unrecognized resources, such as pediatric nurse practitioners reclassified as medical-surgical nurses.
- Organized sports are great for youth, writes U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine's Lisa J. Young, but also creates safety concerns. She offers a number of suggestions from experts about how coaches and parents can make sports safer for kids.